DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 399 456 CE 072 597

AUTHOR	Edwards, Hazel
TITLE	Workdays. A Day in the Life of...the Family Garage Owner.
REPORT NO	ISBN-1-875759-08-5
PUB DATE	95
NOTE	28p.; For related documents, see CE 072 594-603.
AVAILABLE FROM	Draw Publications, P.O. Box 643, Kew, Victoria 3101, Australia ($7 plus $3.50 postage and handling).
PUB TYPE	Books (010) -- Guides - Classroom Use - Instructional Materials (For Learner) (051)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	Adult Basic Education; *Adult Literacy; Adult Reading Programs; *Auto Mechanics; *Career Education; Career Exploration; Entrepreneurship; Foreign Countries; High Interest Low Vocabulary Books; *Literacy Education; Motor Vehicles; *Occupational Information; Quality of Working Life; Reading Instruction; *Small Businesses
IDENTIFIERS	*Australia

ABSTRACT

One of a series of work-based interviews about occupations in Australia, this booklet presents a personal interview with a service station owner about his job. The following questions are answered: what the garage owner does, why he chose the field of employment, how the business has been run, goals for the future, what he does and doesn't like about it, what the garage owner does during a working week, his co-workers, and the hours. Cartoons are used to enliven the material, and a glossary listing 42 words is included. Although designed to be used in literacy classes with adult new readers, the booklets are also appropriate for use with elementary and secondary students in career exploration and career education. (KC)

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Workdays

a day in the life of

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TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

the Family Garage Owner

CE 072 597

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Workdays

a day in the life of ...

the Family Garage Owner

Name George Theodoulou

Aged 23

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a day in the life of...
the Family Garage Owner

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Draw Publications
P.O. Box 643 Kew Victoria 3101
AUSTRALIA

ISBN 1 875759 08 5

Illustrations by Will Goodwin
Design and layout by Draw Publications
Printed by Surrey Printing
Published and distributed by Draw Publications

WHAT KIND OF BUSINESS ARE YOU IN?

This is a family business. We manage a service station.

WHAT WORK DO YOU AND FAMILY MEMBERS DO IN THE BUSINESS?

My brother Andrew is a *mechanic* and I order the stock. He does all the mechanical work, and writes up the receipts, and I *basically* take care of *stock* in the show room and order all the fuel.

WHAT DO YOUR PARENTS DO?

Mum does the banking and my father helps with the books.

WHAT IS YOUR MAIN WORK EACH DAY?

I'm a driveway attendant who manages a service station. Basically, what I do is pump petrol every day.

DO PEOPLE ASK YOU ABOUT YOUR WORK?

Usually, if people ask me I say my real profession is a photographer.

WHY?

Because being a driveway attendant is not all that glamorous.

DID YOU NEED PREPARATION TO RUN A BUSINESS?

Going into business you need to be prepared.

DID ANYONE GIVE YOU HELP?

We had help from my Dad who was an accountant with a service station for many years.

IS YOUR FATHER STILL INVOLVED IN THE BUSINESS?

He's now a *wholesaler* in auto *accessories* which has helped us.

WHAT EXPERIENCE DID YOU BRING TO THE BUSINESS?

I've worked in advertising and know how to *display products* on shelves.

WHAT KIND OF WORK DID YOU DO BEFORE YOU JOINED THE FAMILY BUSINESS?

Originally, I worked as a *studio photographer*. I travelled overseas for six months but couldn't get photographic work when I came back.

HOW LONG HAS YOUR FAMILY HAD THIS BUSINESS?

Dad bought this service station about twelve years ago.

WHEN DID YOU AND YOUR BROTHER JOIN THE BUSINESS?

When the lease ran out last year, Andrew and I decided to come in here a bit earlier before the planned rebuilding.

WHO FINANCED YOU AND YOUR BROTHER?

Originally our father provided the *financial stake*, but we work the business.

IS IT DIFFICULT TO RUN A BUSINESS?

If you're willing to *give it a go*, there's money out there. It just depends how many hours you're prepared to work.

IN WHAT WAY DOES A MIGRANT FAMILY BACKGROUND INFLUENCE YOU?

Our Greek migrant family background doesn't *contribute* directly to this business as it's no advantage to be *bi-lingual* in this area.

Mike
Goodwin

AS MIGRANTS WERE THERE ANY PRESSURES ON YOU TO SUCCEED?

Migrant family background *pressures* to achieve do exist.

IN WHAT WAY?

I've always heard Dad's story of coming to Australia with nothing and working hard to *achieve*...you're sort of made to feel you should work.

WHAT IS DIFFERENT ABOUT YOUR SERVICE STATION BUSINESS?

Since we're *independently* owned, we need to offer driveway service or cheaper petrol to attract the customers.

CAN YOU WORK ALONE?

We have driveway service here, so I couldn't manage alone.

WHAT CHANGES COULD BE IN YOUR WORKPLACE IN THE FUTURE?

Later, it will be *simplified* with *computerised pumps* and a *console operation*.

WHAT IS A CONSOLE OPERATION?

It's where someone sits at a desk pressing buttons, and it's *relatively* easy to get someone in to run the console.

HOW DO YOU FEEL ABOUT WORKING WITH YOUR FAMILY?

More trust exists in a family business.

WHAT DO YOU MEAN BY TRUST?

We can speak to each other differently than we would to an *employee* such as the mechanic we have employed.

ARE YOU TOGETHER ALL THE TIME?

Yes, we're together all the time. Sometimes we do get on each others' nerves but you have to learn to *compromise* for the sake of the business.

WHAT KIND OF TENSIONS ARE THERE?

Tensions can exist in families where one works more than another. Sometimes I feel that I'm doing more than Andrew, or he does too.

HOW DO YOU COPE WITH THAT KIND OF TENSION?

Then I'd tell Andrew or he tells me. He might be on the phone ordering parts, but I'm stuck out there on my own. You have to speak about how you feel or it's no good.

DO YOU TALK ABOUT YOUR WORKPLACE AT HOME?

At home, we always have dinner late, but together, and talk over the day.

ARE YOU ALL LIVING AT HOME?

At present, we all live at home but Andrew will be getting married later this year.

WHAT WOULD YOU DO IN A TYPICAL WEEK?

We start at 6.30am Monday to Saturday and close at 8pm. Sunday we open at 7.30am.

HOW MANY DAYS AND HOURS?

At the moment we work a thirteen day fortnight with one day off which averages a 90 hour week.

IS IT BORING WORKING SUCH LONG HOURS?

It is so *routine* now, we wake up, come to work, pump petrol all day and then go home. Anything that happens in between is a *bonus*, *considering* the hours we work.

WHAT DOES WORK MEAN TO YOU?

Work means waking up early at the hours I prefer not to be waking up, and coming to this place where I spend 10-12 hours a day, running a business.

DO YOU THINK YOU WILL STAY IN THE GARAGE BUSINESS?

I can see down the track that I won't be in this field for too long.

WHY DO YOU WORK SO HARD?

Expanding the service station is important now.

WHAT WOULD YOU LIKE TO CHANGE ABOUT YOUR WORK?

I'd like to change my hours and have more *weekends* off.

IS IT DIFFICULT TO WORK SUCH LONG HOURS?

Being single with no *regular commitments*, at present it's easier for me than for Andrew who wants to spend time with his *fiancee*.

WHAT KIND OF SKILLS DO YOU NEED TO RUN THE GARAGE BUSINESS?

Management skills are necessary for running a garage.

DO YOU EMPLOY ANYONE TO HELP IN THE BUSINESS?

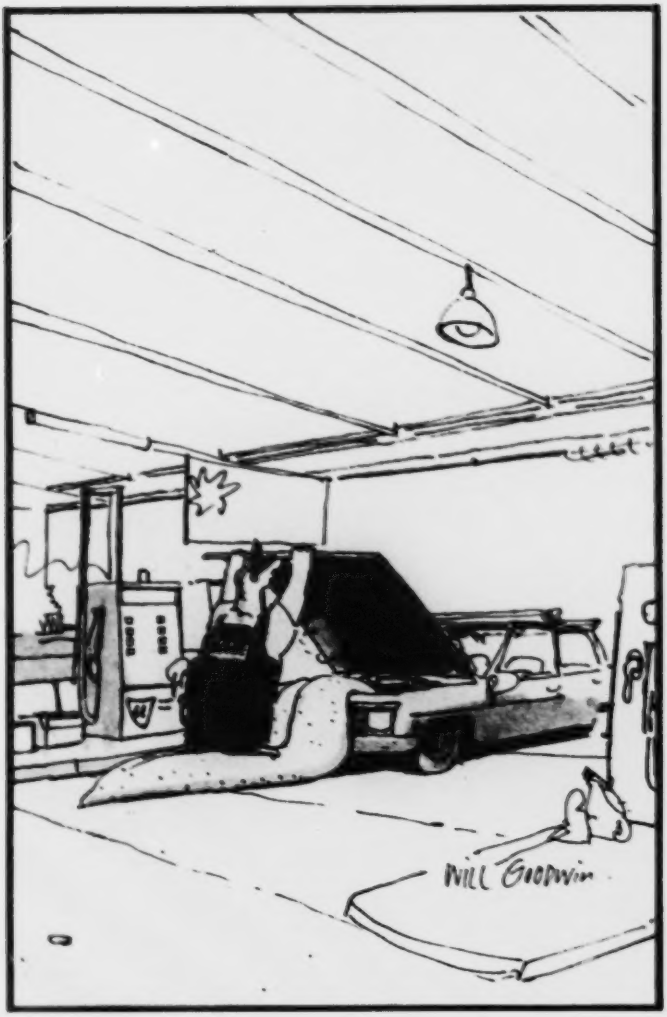
We employ a mechanic and some part-timers.

DO YOU HAVE TO BE ALERT ALL THE TIME?

You have to be quick and *on the ball* or you lose customers and lose track of what you're doing. You need *commonsense*.

WHAT OTHER SKILLS DO YOU NEED?

Mathematical skills for bookkeeping and the banking are needed.



Hey Mate ... I think she's thirsty!

IS THAT DIFFICULT TO DO?

It's not very difficult but you do need an understanding. Pumping petrol is not a very skilful job, it's not hard.

TO WHAT EXTENT IS YOUR FRIEND'S WORK RELATED TO YOURS?

My friends have their own businesses like a hairdressing salon, a menswear store and a jeans company. So we do discuss business management when we go out.

DO YOU TAKE A WAGE FROM THE BUSINESS?

I don't draw a regular *salary*, I just take money as I need it and the rest goes back into the business.

WHAT SATISFACTION DOES YOUR WORK OFFER?

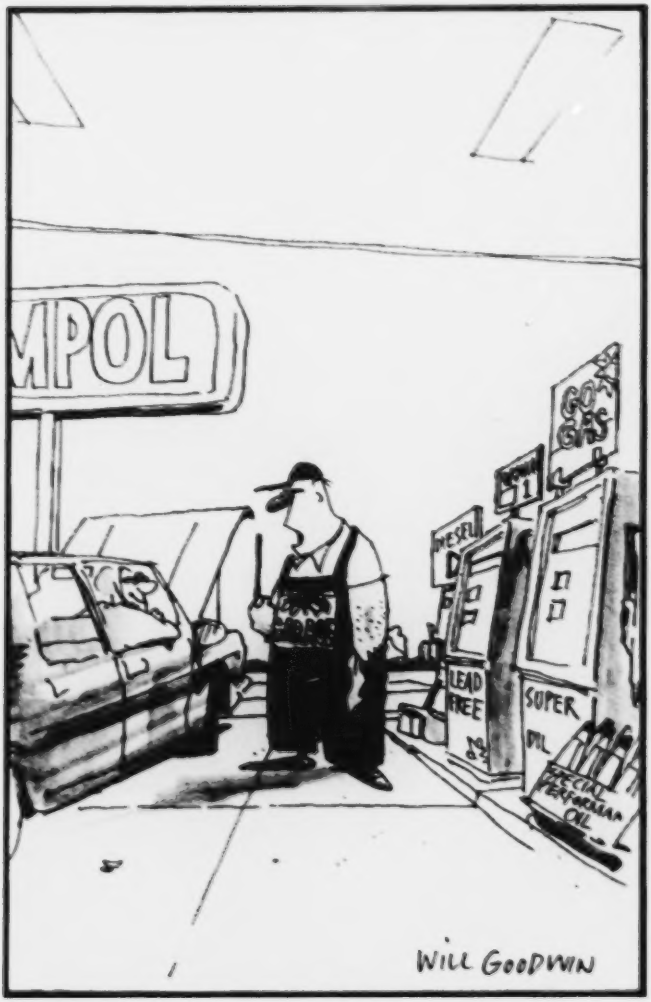
Counting the money at the end of the day is my greatest satisfaction. Doing a good day, putting in the hours and seeing the *rewards* at the end are what it's about.

WHAT ANNOYS YOU?

The only thing which annoys me is when customers just sit inside their cars and ignore us. I wish it was self service and they could do their own. It really annoys me. I have feelings too. Just a simple 'thank you' wouldn't hurt.

HOW MANY OF YOUR CUSTOMERS JUST SIT IN THEIR CARS?

About 70% sit inside their cars, give you the keys and say how much they want. 30% get out and talk about the weather or have a *bit of a chat*. That's important.



Sorry Madam, we don't have anything in polyunsaturated...

WHO DO YOU THINK CONTRIBUTES MOST IN OUR SOCIETY?

In our society, I think the labourers contribute most. From working here, I've noticed the labourers are the ones working the *backbreaking* hours.

WHAT IS YOUR MAIN AIM IN THE GARAGE BUSINESS?

My main aim is to build up the business and expand.

WHAT WOULD YOU DO THEN?

I'd like to retire at around thirty, manage my businesses and work part-time as a photographer.

WOULD YOU OPERATE A PHOTOGRAPHIC BUSINESS TOO?

I'm not interested in running a photographic business later, but in the *artistic* challenge of being a photographer.

WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE JOBS?

Here I'm working hard, but there's more *potential* than working for a wage as I did with studio photography.

GLOSSARY

mechanic	*qualified trade person who services cars*
basically	*simply*
stock	*goods for sale*
wholesaler	*provider of goods to shops at a special price*
accessories	*extra fittings and articles for cars*
display	*show*
products	*goods*
originally	*first*
studio	*workroom*
photographer	*person who uses a camera*
financial stake	*money*
give it a go	*Australian slang jargon: to try*
contribute	*help*
bi-lingual	*to speak two languages*
pressures	*forces*
achieve	*gain or do well*
independently	*privately*
simplified	*made easier*

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GLOSSARY CONTINUED

computerised	*processing information in a computer*
console operation	*remote control of pumps from inside the shop*
relatively	*fairly or equally*
employee	*person who works for an owner of a business*
compromise	*to find common ground on an issue*
tensions	*stresses*
routine	*usual order of tasks*
bonus	*extra gift*
considering	*thinking about*
expanding	*growing or extending*
weekend	*Australian slang jargon: for Saturday and Sunday*
regular	*usual*
commitments	*things that must be done*
fiancee	*a person who has promised to marry someone*
management	*person in charge*
on the ball	*Australian slang jargon: for being aware or alert*

GLOSSARY CONTINUED

commonsense	*practical understanding*
mathematical	*to do with numbers*
salary	*pay or wage*
rewards	*gains or profits*
bit of a chat	*Australian slang jargon for a conversation*
backbreaking	*tiring and exhausting*
artistic	*creating something*
potential	*reward*

Hazel Edwards'

Workdays

a day in the life of ...

A collection of simply written, work-based interviews, to give an insight into others' workstyles for beginning adult readers. The subjects were chosen to cover a range of occupations and workplace situations in Australia including the self-employed, franchisee, professional, trade and semi-skilled.

'A day in the life of ...' series focuses on twenty people in varied occupations by profiling them through the technique of interview.

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Workdays is based on real people in real jobs. The aim of the series is to provide simply written, interesting and relevant material for new readers.

Author Hazel Edwards' method of researching is by interview and visiting the workplace.

Her previous one hundred books have included adult literacy, scripts, non-fiction, crime and childrens books. Currently she is researching other workplaces for more books in the ' day in a life of ' series.

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